

*Amandla!: A Revolution in
Four Part Harmony:*
Film Teaching Guide

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Abstract:

Highlighting music in South Africa's fight against minority rule, *Amandla!: A Revolution in Four Party Harmony* takes a chronological approach to addressing resistance against apartheid. Although the film does not seek to define apartheid and chronicle other historical events, it does provide succinct background knowledge while achieving its aim of highlighting the long struggle against white minority rule. Released in 2002, *Amandla!* gives life to South African singers and composers who fought against their oppressive regime using freedom songs; particularly highlighting famed composer Vuyisile Mini whose body was exhumed in the beginning of the film, and given a proper hero's ceremony at the end. In my 10th grade Global Studies classroom, this film, shown in clips throughout the course of a 50-minute class period with discussion bookending the viewing on subsequent class days, is a perfect supplement to add context and nuance to my discussion about apartheid and recent South African history.

Essential Questions:

- 1) What is the importance of song in the struggle against apartheid? How does this method of protest or demonstration compare to others (i.e.: political, military)? What other roles did song take on for the oppressed population?
- 2) What were some methods white South Africans used to suppress the majority of the population? What do you suppose the intended purpose of apartheid was?
- 3) What was the importance of giving Vuyisile Mini a proper burial as a national hero over 30 years after he was killed by the apartheid regime? What does this act symbolize?
- 4) Apartheid is often personified throughout the film. How is it personified? How would you personify this law?
- 5) Many groups outside of South Africa, from bands like U2 to the United Nations, had additionally spoke out against apartheid in a variety of ways. What are the pros and cons of both external and internal protests and actions?

Vocabulary List:

- 1) Apartheid: A policy instituted by the white National Party of South Africa in 1948 that detailed a system of segregation on the basis of race. Escalating in the 1960s, apartheid severely limited rights for non-whites including, but not limited to: employment, education, travel, land ownership and residence.
- 2) African National Congress (ANC): Founded in 1912, the ANC is a political party known for both peaceful and violent protests against white majority rule in South Africa. They are currently the majority party in South African politics.
- 3) Amandla: In Zulu and Xhosa, two of the 11 current official South African languages, 'amandla' translates to "power". The word was used by the ANC to rally its supporters against apartheid.
- 4) Vuyisile Mini: A member of the ANC, was an important composer and activist against apartheid. He was among the first executed by the National Party government in 1964, buried in a 'pauper's grave'.
- 5) Nelson Mandela: Member of the ANC, Mandela is a pivotal figure in the struggle for equality in South Africa. He was jailed for 27 years for undermining the apartheid government before becoming South Africa's first black president (1994).
- 6) Townships: Urban areas in South Africa reserved for non-whites, with typically deplorable conditions. Non-whites were relocated to these townships, such as Soweto and Meadowlands, in effort to further segregate the population.
- 7) Afrikaans: A derivative of Dutch from early settlers, the Afrikaans language was spoken by white National Party. It became a symbol of white oppression in 1976 when Afrikaans became the mandatory primary language in the nation's schools.

Contextual Resources:

- 1) "Endgame- Apartheid Timeline." PBS. PBS, 19 Dec. 2010. Web. 13 Aug. 2015. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/endgame/timeline.html>>. While Endgame- Apartheid Timeline is a companion piece for a PBS documentary it is a fantastic interactive timeline for students to quickly and succinctly reference important events and dates during the struggle against apartheid.
- 2) The following curated collection of images will provide students with a lasting visual companionship to the film, which will supplement often-fleeting images broached in *Amandla!*. Among these include a map of South Africa, a table describing inequities of apartheid, and a Time magazine photo essay in respective order.
 - a. "Map of South Africa." Lonely Planet, n.d. Web. 13 Aug. 2015. <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/africa/south-africa/map_of_south-africa.jpg>.



- b. "Apartheid and the People of South Africa." Stanford University, n.d. Web. 13 Aug. 2015. <<http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~cale/cs201/pictures/table.jpg>>.

Apartheid and the People of South Africa		
	<i>Blacks</i>	<i>Whites</i>
Population	19 million	4.5 million
Land Allocation	13 percent	87 percent
Share of National Income	< 20 percent	75 percent
Ratio of average earnings	1	14
Minimum taxable income	360 rands	750 rands
Doctors/population	1/44,000	1/400
Infant mortality rate	20% (urban) 40% (rural)	2.7%
Annual expenditure on education per pupil	\$45	\$696
Teacher/pupil ratio	1/60	1/22

Figure 1: Disproportionate Treatment circa 1978. Source: [Lco80]

- c. Mason, John Edwin. "The Photos That Gave Americans Their First Glimpse of Apartheid in 1950." Time. Time, 11 Feb. 2015. Web. 13 Aug. 2015. <<http://time.com/3668247/apartheid-photo-essay-life/>>.

Pre-Viewing Activities:

- 1) Creating essential questions:
 - a. Students should read A. O. Scott's *New York Times* film review of *Amandla!: A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* published February 19th, 2003 before viewing the film. This short review can be read either as homework or during class time:
<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9D06E2D61F3AF93AA25751C0A9659C8B63>
 - b. Next, have students compose 2-3 essential questions that they can use to gain to help them focus their viewing. These can be created either as homework or during class time using think-pair-share methodology.
 - c. After the film, these essential questions can serve as guiding discussion questions in small groups or throughout the class.

- 2) Exploring internal and external protests:
 - a. Review the essential question: "Many groups outside of South Africa, from bands like U2 to the United Nations, are additionally speaking out against apartheid in a variety of ways. What are the pros and cons of both external and internal protests and actions?"
 - a. Watch U2's Silver and Gold music video, providing students with a printed copy of the lyrics:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmuhR3gqxZM>
 - b. Discuss the meaning of the lyrics in relationship to apartheid.
 - c. After the conclusion of the film, revisit this song and pose the above essential question to students. Compare with internal freedom songs from *Amandla!*.

Post-Viewing Activities:

- 1) Protest Songs:
 - a. A protest song is a song that is associated with a movement for social or political change.
 - b. Consider the essential question: 'What is the importance of song in the struggle against apartheid? How does this method of protest or demonstration compare to others (i.e.: political, military)? What other roles did song take on for the oppressed population?' Discussion using think-pair-share.
 - c. Ask students to brainstorm other songs that have had an impact socially or politically. They can be local, national, or international. Students can think of one song for homework and post onto a 'Padlet' forum, or they can discuss during class time.
 - d. The following two sources are great American examples, all of which include video:

- i. <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/readers-poll-the-10-best-protest-songs-of-all-time-20141203/barry-mcguire-eve-of-destruction-20141203>
 - ii. <http://newsone.com/1460645/top-10-civil-rights-protest-songs-of-all-time/>
- 2) South African National Anthem:
- a. South Africa is an extremely diverse nation; many of whose people apartheid laws deliberately subjugated. In this activity, students will look at the national anthem to get a glimpse of the diversity and spirit of the country.
 - b. Watch the anthem, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTtINHRja4k>, and follow along with the lyrics: <http://www.southafrica-newyork.net/consulate/anthem.html>
 - c. Discuss in small groups or with the entire class using the following prompts as guidelines:
 - i. How many languages are official in South Africa? What percentage of people speak each language as their native tongue?
 - ii. What different languages are utilized in the national anthem?
 - iii. What is the significance of using multiple languages in this anthem?

Background Reading:

- 1) **Background knowledge:** "Apartheid." History.com. A&E Television Networks, n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2015. <<http://www.history.com/topics/apartheid>>. This history channel timeline on apartheid offers teachers a quick guide to the pieces of South Africa's past relevant to *Amandla!*. This source should serve as a jumping-off point for further, independent, research.
- 2) **After apartheid:** Krog, Antjie. *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*. Amazon, 8 Aug. 2000. Web. 15 Aug. 2015. <<http://www.amazon.com/Country-My-Skull-Sorrow-Forgiveness/dp/0812931297>>. Antjie Krog was an anti-apartheid Afrikaner reporter for SABC during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In *Country of My Skull*, she slowly descends into madness recounting the horrors of apartheid exposed during the TRC. While this may be a challenging read for students, this book offers excellent background for teachers trying to make sense of the reconciliation process.
- 3) **Digging deeper:** *District 9*. Dir. Neill Blomkamp. Sony Pictures, 2009. DVD. For students interested in a provocative way for learning more about apartheid, *District 9* offers an allegory recounting aliens who have been stranded on Earth in Johannesburg. Students can draw many interesting parallels from this South African director's debut.

Tips for Teachers:

- 1) *Amandla!* is a film that is fairly easy to skip from scene to scene in order to highlight particular parts that correspond with a teacher's individual curriculum. Although the film is 108 minutes long, it can be paired down to a 45-50 minute class, with time dedicated during the class before and/or after for discussion.
- 2) Similarly, if you wish to avoid the exhuming of Mini's body, watch the first 2 minutes, then skip ahead one screen to "1948"—the beginning of apartheid. Furthermore, to avoid the migrant worker piece, you could easily skip once past migrants loading on coal trains to land on a primary source passbook commercial.
- 3) Lastly, the film offers great description of the Sharpeville and Soweto uprisings, which are easy to cue up in a classroom setting, that can serve as stand alone segments. These should be reviewed and then digested with students immediately afterwards.
- 4) *Amandla!* gives excellent insight and nuance into the apartheid resistance movement, however should not be used as a substitute for direct instruction. Instead, this film is an excellent supplement into an aspect of apartheid that does not traditionally get addressed.
- 5) There are many primary source clips throughout the film that can be considered 'teachable moments'. For example, asking students impressions on the passbook commercial early on in the film will give students a sense of the injustice and inequity of the system.
- 6) Particularly because *Amandla!* consists largely of a series of interviews with freedom singers, students may misconstrue the intensity of the singers' feelings if not given the proper background. For example, when discussing the forced migration of non-whites to townships; singer Nancy Jacobs laments with anger: "we will shoot you, we will kill you, be careful what you say. You're gonna die, slowly, be careful what you do." It is important to impress upon students that song was one of the only ways for people to express frustration with their situations without resorting to anger, in order to keep the integrity of the songs in tact for some students.
- 7) *Amandla!* aligned perfectly with content discussed in Modern African History: Colonialism, Independence, and Legacies. The last country in the continent to be truly independent, without minority rule, South Africa has a troubled past, and this film highlights resistance techniques people were able to use.

Subjective Review:

As Sifiso Ntuli stated in *Amandla!*: “Song is something that we communicate to the people who otherwise would not have understood where we were coming from. You could give them a long political speech and they would still not understand, but I tell you, when you finish that song people be like I know where you guys are coming from. Death unto apartheid.” I absolutely loved watching this film, and will definitely include *Amandla!* in my unit on Africa next school year. Once students have context for understanding apartheid, showing *Amandla!*, either the entire film or in sections equaling to 50 minutes, will be a perfect supplement to the curriculum. Students will identify with the personal struggles eloquently outlined in the film, and song is a perfect medium in which to express this. Freedom/liberation songs are also very prominent in student’s lives or working memories, and thus they can empathize with the struggles during apartheid. Watching the film certainly gave me a richer understanding of the resistance to apartheid, and renewing my interest in researching the transitional justice process after apartheid in South Africa. Viewing *Amandla!* and noting my personal reaction also reminded me of the importance to bringing different perspectives and mediums into my classroom so students can resonate with the material in a variety of ways.